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A How to Guide on:
Stop Motion Ideas – Talent/Medium



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Change Lives

Almost Anything You Can Imagine!

The magic of stop motion is that as long as you can imagine it, make it, move it, and take it, you can do almost pretty much anything you want!

How easy or hard this task is though, will depend on what you have planned and also how much work you are willing to put into it.

Some ways are much easier than others but a simple idea is not a bad thing either.

What to Film?

There are definitely at least three ways about this:

- 1) Look around your house to see what you have that gives you ideas. Toys, objects, anything. Then you can form ideas with the items you find.
- 2) The other way around is, think of some ideas first, and see what items you already own or what you can create yourself to make your idea.
- 3) Looking through books, movies, seeing something on TV or even music may be great inspiration to give you ideas for a stop motion clip.

Finding the Stars and the Stage

So what are the most common things people make stop motion out of?

Claymation - Plasticine (or Play Doh)

Pixilation - Involves real people

Object Motion - Cars and trains

Object Motion - Soft toys

Object Motion - Lego or similar blocks

Object Motion - Articulated figures

Object Motion - Household Items

Cut Out Motion - Paper cut outs or drawn cut outs

Food (Yes, food!)

But the list is just what we have selected but otherwise it's really endless.
It's up to your creativity and what items you have that you can use.

The Ups and the Downs of Each

Let's go through the list of the most common things used and the ups and downs of each:

Claymation

Stop motion using plasticine or Play-Doh is a popular one and you can make anything with it ranging from shapes to creatures to people, to something that can turn into all of them.

The Ups

- You can do a wide range of things with it.
- It doesn't take long to set up.
- You can quickly make something and film it right away.
- Cheaper option to most other methods on the list.

Plasticine roll up together to make a snail that squirms away.



The Downs

- The amount of colours you have can limit some of the things you do.
- Limit to how complex you can make it with just the materials on its own.
- Can get messy depending on how it is used.
- The animations you see in movies and TV are actually very detailed models that would take a lot of effort to replicate.

Pixilation

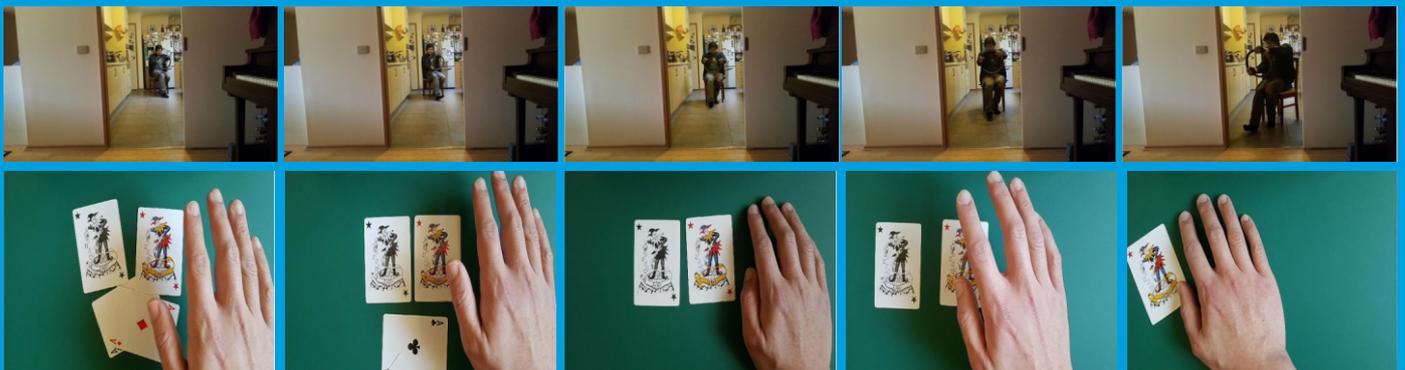
Real Live People

You and your friends or family members can star in your own stop motion video! But you can take your stop motion to a new dimension when you put real people into the mix with inanimate objects!

Ups:

- Starring in your own stop motion!
- Do some great effects that you normally can't film in real-time.
- Almost anything you can think of.
- Mix real people with inanimate objects for great results.
- Lots of fun if you are able to get friends or family involved.

Using a torch and your shadow, you can make some great things



Playing cards that come alive and run away!

Downs:

- You may need more than one person to help you set up and take photos if you are having trouble framing your shots.
- Some techniques like lying on the floor and using it as a background takes lots of space to film.

Object Motion – Cars and Trains

One of the easiest object motion items to work with are vehicles. For cars or trains you just have to make them move and even the wheels turn and animate by themselves when you roll them forward!

Ups:

- Cars or trains is one of the easiest toy items to stop motion.
- Toy vehicles come in all sorts of sizes and are easy to find.

Vehicles are great for beginners as there is usually not many things to manipulate.



Downs:

- Cars and trains may need dynamic angles and cuts to make interesting.
- A story with cars or trains can be limited if characters are not present.
- You may need larger 1:16 or 1:24 scale vehicles for close ups if your camera doesn't have a macro option.
- Larger scale vehicles are much more expensive.

Object Motion – Household Items

Lots of fun things can be made with household items. You can turn objects into characters or make them move around or form patterns or even develop a story with them.

Ups:

- Only limited to your imagination.
- You can use anything that you own.
- Very quick and easy to get results.

Teaspoons, butter knives and forks forming a pattern that spins.



Downs:

- Depending on the objects chosen it could require a lot of space to film.
- If working on the floor, you may need a stand or a higher surface to point your camera down.

Object Motion – Soft Toys / Plushies

Soft toys that can stand on their own are really fun ones to do. You can film them in little shorts or take them on a grand adventure!

Ups:

- Almost everyone owns at least one soft toy of some kind.
- Most only need to waddle like a penguin for a walking animation
- You can give life to one of your soft toy buddies that everyone can share in and even give them voices if you wanted to.

Soft toys that can stand on their own are great candidates



Downs:

- Most soft toys that can stand on their own would probably have limited movement to express themselves with.
- Most will only be able to waddle to move

Object Motion – Lego and Similar Blocks

Lego and similar blocks in general are always versatile due to the amount of variety and ease of use. Lego can come in all forms and you can make anything with them but also, the figures are small with limited articulation and very easy to animate

Ups:

- Cartoonish design makes them light hearted and fun subject matters,
- Figures are easy to animate due to size.
- Limited movement with the figures for hassle free movement.
- Interlocking blocks quite stable for variety of shots
- Light and easy to prop up for floating or jumping effects.
- Huge variety available.



Lego figures outside a hand made bank prop background.

Downs:

- Limited movement can sometimes be a negative (but rarely).
- Expensive to buy if you don't have many.
- Story ideas can sometimes be limited to what you have.

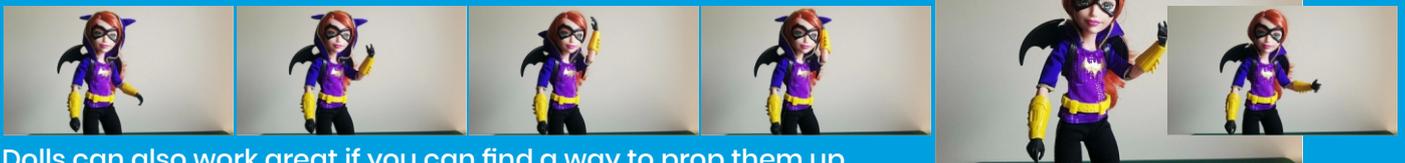
Object Motion – Articulated Figures

Articulated figures with three or more points of articulation (moving joints) are great for using pop culture or licensed characters to tell your own stories with. Or you can put them in stories or situations they normally wouldn't be in. Articulated figures can also include dolls and action figures.

Ups:

- Make your own scenarios with existing characters.
- Crossing over characters from different shows/comics/movies/genres.
- Many dolls, action figures or toys in general are out there.

Get your favourite characters together to make the cross over of your dreams!



Dolls can also work great if you can find a way to prop them up.

Downs:

- Limited to what you own.
- Can be expensive if you don't already have some.
- The more joints a figure has the more work it will be to animate.
- Walking or running shots are very hard without using tricks or tools.
- Depending on the figure, some may be too heavy to prop up for effects.

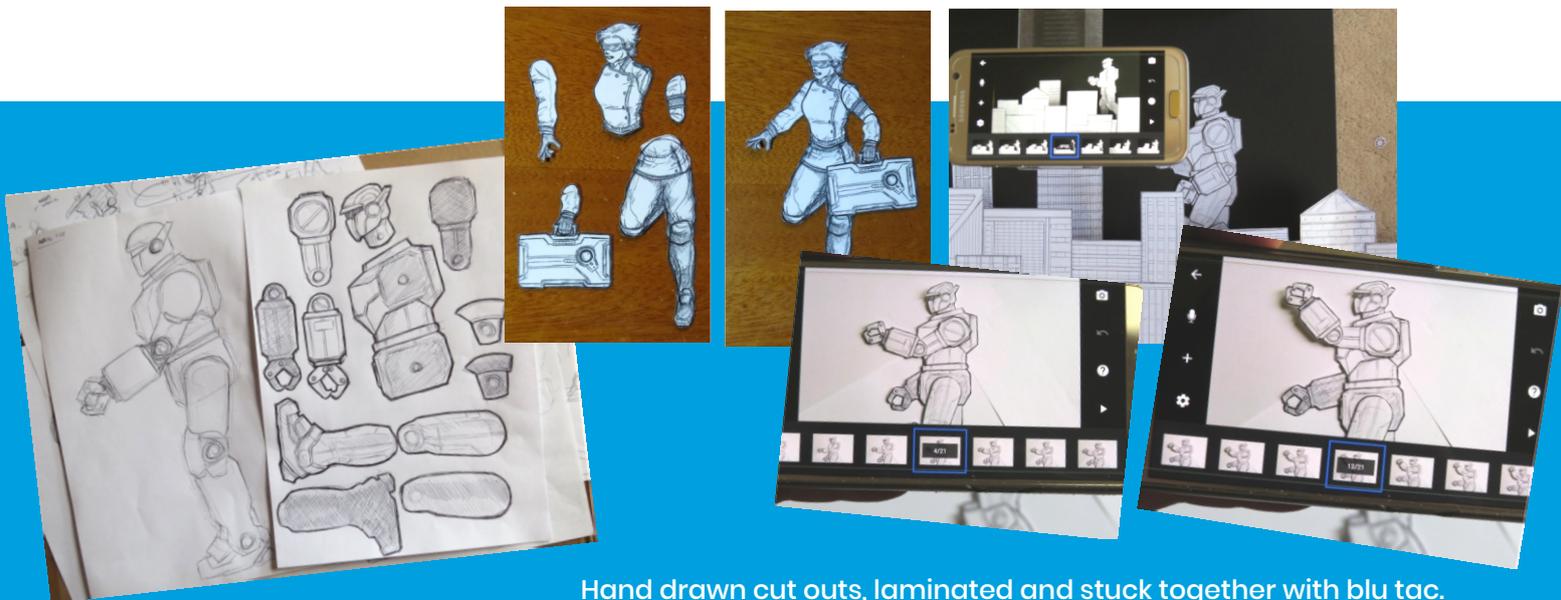


CutOut-Motion

Cut-out motion is a lot of work involved to prep and set up initially and it also requires some planning before hand, to work out what you need to craft. Again this is as easy or as complicated as you want to make it. You can draw things and cut them out or you can cut out coloured paper to make general shapes and even people and animals, to make your own characters, props and backgrounds.

Ups:

- Only limited to your imagination, art and crafting skills.
- Draw or make your own characters.
- Closest technique to being traditional like hand animation.



Hand drawn cut outs, laminated and stuck together with blu tac.

Downs:

- Requires much more planning than the other methods.
- Requires much more preparation than the other methods.
- The larger your paper crafts are the more space you may need for filming.
- Need to set up a steady and stable stand to point your camera down.
- Working on the floor is tricky for some.



Glossary of Words

There may be some words throughout this series you may not have heard of before or not sure about its meaning, so here are some of the meanings for them:

Inanimate

An object that cannot move on its own.

Pixelation

A term used for digital images that are displayed onscreen (usually unintentionally) in a way where the tiny little coloured squares (pixels), are displayed large enough that each individual square can be seen.

Framing

In a photographic or cinematic term, framing is how subjects are positioned within the view of the camera display or final image.

Dynamic

In film making terms, dynamic camera is something that moves along with the subjects or gives the feeling of movement and energy in scenes.

Scale Size

Toys or models have scale sizes to determine how small or large an item is. 1:1 scale or it is also shown with a forward slash instead of a colon (1/1), means that an object is 1 to 1 size replication of the real thing it is based on, So something that is 1:6 scale is six times smaller than the real thing and something that is 1:24 scale is twenty four times smaller than the real thing it is based on.

Articulation

In any toy, action figures or dolls, articulation means joints. So if a figure has 5 points of articulation, it means there are five spots on the body where it can move its joints. The more articulation a figure has the more options it has to do more different poses.

Props

In movie or theatre terms, props are pieces of equipment or items characters may have or objects that sit in the background as displays. It is short for properties and this is usually meant properties of either the stage, set or characters.